



The brief season of fall is a special time at Voyageurs National Park when the forest turns from green to gold.

AUTUMN IS A GREAT TIME FOR...

Scenery

Fall comes early to the north woods of Voyageurs National Park. How early depends on the year, but whether autumn color brightens leaves in late August, September, or early October, it is beautiful. Aspen, birch, maple and oak leaves turn shades of gold, orange, red, and brown. With a dark green backdrop of pine, spruce and fir, the vibrant display of deciduous trees creates a stunning contrast that provides photographers with ample inspiration.

Solitude

As summer ends and a season of cold approaches, crowds both on the water and on the trails disappear. For those seeking a different experience in the park, the months of September and October provide the opportunity to have the lakes and forests of the park almost entirely to yourself. Of course you won't be completely alone. You may see a few like-minded people, and the moose, deer, wolves, otters and other year-round residents of the park will be here too.

Exploration

For those looking to explore the park's miles of hiking trails, autumn is a great time to enjoy not only great scenery and solitude, but also the absence of some of the park's less popular denizens...flies and mosquitoes. The same chill that makes the fall air crisp and fragrant is also wonderful for sending biting insects on their way. Park visitor centers are open daily through September, and the Rainy Lake Visitor Center is open year-round. Stop by for help planning your autumn adventure, or check our website for more information.



SEASONAL SAFETY

Boating in Spring and Fall

Aids to navigation that mark the primary channels and alert boaters to submerged hazards are not installed until late spring, and are removed at the end of the summer. Use extreme caution when boating during spring and summer. Always bring navigational maps, and know how to read them. Travel at reduced speeds and be on the lookout for submerged hazards.

Changing Weather

Weather conditions may change rapidly at any time of the year, but spring and fall days are especially likely to see wide ranging temperatures and cold precipitation. Always check the weather forecast before heading into the park and be alert for approaching storms.

Dress Appropriately

- It is a good idea to dress in layers at any time of the year, but especially important when seasons are changing. It may be sunny and 70 degrees when you start your hike, but a surprise rain or snow shower can drop temperatures dramatically in just a few hours.
- During the winter it is important to dress for extreme cold. Temperatures regularly drop below zero and stay there for days, or weeks. If you are not experienced with extreme cold weather please talk with somebody who is before planning an outdoor excursion in the park. To enjoy the beauty of this special time of year you will want to be prepared.
- Wear a warm hat. Most body heat is lost through the head.
 - Wear layered clothing. Proper layers trap warm air without keeping perspiration next to the skin.
 - Wear loose waterproof boots that allow good circulation in your feet. Bring extra socks in case the pair you are wearing become damp.
 - Mittens will keep your hands more warm than gloves in the wintertime.
 - Prevent dehydration and exhaustion, which can lead to hypothermia. Drink plenty of water. Pace yourself when engaged in vigorous activity.

Travel on Frozen Lake Surfaces

The surface of park lakes can freeze to over two feet in thickness during the cold winter months. When ice conditions are good people travel over frozen lake surfaces on foot, on snowmobiles, and even in cars. Unseen lake currents beneath the ice can create zones of weakness that are dangerous to travel on. If you do not know the thickness of the ice, do not attempt to cross it.

The park grooms miles of snowmobile trails on park lakes, and also maintains an ice road that starts at the Rainy Lake Visitor Center. It is a good idea to travel on park-maintained routes that are routinely checked to ensure that sufficient ice exists to support the weight of snowmobiles or cars.

During late fall and early spring the lakes are in a state of transition. Thin ice typically begins forming on lake surfaces in November or December, making open water for boating unavailable.

Beginning in late March or early April the winter ice begins to thin, making travel over the frozen surface difficult as pockets of slush and standing water develop on top of the thick ice below. As spring progresses lake ice thins and pockets of open water appear. This is a dangerous time when travel over the remaining lake ice is strongly discouraged.

Hunting Season

Hunting is prohibited in Voyageurs National Park. However, outside of the boundaries of the park hunting is a popular activity, particularly during bear and white tailed deer season. Be aware when recreating outdoors during hunting season and consider wearing flame orange clothing if your hike will take you outside of the park or near park boundaries.

Hypothermia

Hypothermia is a dangerous lowering of the body's core temperature. Hypothermia can occur at any time of the year when a person has experienced prolonged exposure to cold air, winds, or cold water. If you suspect hypothermia first take steps to stop any additional heat loss from occurring. Seek shelter and begin warming. If you suspect advanced hypothermia then medical assistance should be sought.

Frostbite

Prevent frostbite by dressing appropriately for extreme cold weather. As temperatures decrease, the possibility of frostbite and hypothermia increases. Frostbite occurs when skin freezes. During the early stages of frostbite skin color may turn white and you may feel a burning or tingling sensation. When you first notice signs of frostbite it is time to seek shelter and warm the affected area. As frostbite becomes more serious skin color may change to a bright red or mottled purple color. Once frostbite has advanced the sensation of pain and burning may stop as deeper tissues freeze and become hard to the touch. Frostbite can result in serious injury. Be aware and take preventative measures. Be confident of your cold weather skills before engaging in outdoor activities during extreme northern winters.

